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ADVOCATE OF PEACE.

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PRACTICABILITY OF A CONGRESS OF NATIONS,

ILLUSTRATED FROM HISTORY.

Brief notes of a part of a Lecture by William Ladd, Esq.

THE history of our world is full of hope to the friends of peace. It has been for ages a series of improvements; and, when we see how one delusion after another has passed away like shadows on the mountain, we may well hope to see every other delusion vanishing ere-long before the light of truth, and the efforts of a devoted, untiring Christian philanthropy.

Our object is to devise, and bring into use, *some* plan for the prevention of war; some substitute for the savage argument of the cannon and the sword hitherto employed in settling international disputes; some rational way for rational, Christian men to adjust those difficulties which are wont to involve nations in bloody conflict. For this purpose we propose a standing tribunal to which nations can look for protection and redress without the sword; and the present confusion of international law calls aloud for some tribunal of this sort. We need both a CONGRESS *and* a COURT *of nations*;—a congress with legislative powers to settle points of international law; a court to apply this code, and adjust such cases as might be referred to them. All these powers should be vested in the same body; as its decisions would in all cases be binding only when ratified by the governments concerned.

To prove the feasibility of such a plan, let me refer you to the efforts made for the abolition of the slave-trade. That nefarious traffic continued for ages among our own enlightened

forefathers; and, when the idea of its abolition was first agitated in the British Parliament, it was scouted as ridiculous and impossible. In 1787, six men met in a parlor in London, and resolved on abolishing the slave-trade. And they did it. They inquired; they ferreted out facts; they published the results; they moved the British nation, and forced Parliament, in thirty-one years, to decree the entire abolition of that traffic.

Look back at certain causes and kinds of war that have ceased. Once all Christendom could easily be plunged, age after age, in *religious* wars. Peter the hermit, with a rope round his body, and sackcloth on his loins, went over Europe, and kindled it from one end to the other into a flame of zeal to embark in the crusades, those wars of religion for the recovery of Palestine from unbaptized hands. In the twelfth century, there were other wars for religion. A war of thirty years was waged against the Albigenses for their alleged heresies. But religion has now ceased to be a cause of war; other causes, productive of so many wars in past ages, have also lost their power more or less to produce such a result; and this process must continue until few occasions, if any, will be left for the bloody strife of nations.

Review the history of feudal and chivalrous times. The ordeal, the judicial combat, the trial by battle, were considered as appeals to God, and were actually in advance of previous modes of redress, where the injured party took vengeance into his own hands, and became at once accuser, witness, judge, and executioner. Nor was this method of vengeance peculiar to our forefathers. The principle we find in that part of the Jewish code which permitted the relatives of a person, killed either by design or accident, to avenge his death, on the principle of life for life, and provided cities of refuge to which the manslayer could flee from the avengers of blood. This custom of private revenge has prevailed among all savages. It continued for centuries all over Europe; and Alfred the Great introduced at the same time the ordeal by battle, and the trial by jury. Both were alike legalized modes of settling disputes; and that by battle was accompanied with circumstances of imposing solemnity. The combatants met; a judge was appointed to regulate the trial; a minister of the gospel was present, as now in war, to implore the divine supervision and blessing; and then the orders were given for conflict by the proclamation, *God speed the battle*. Even this was certainly better than private assassination, the practice which it

was designed to supplant ; and from the trial by battle have come many of the terms and phrases now used in our courts of law ; such as *challenging* jurors, and being tried by *peers*. Here is the progress of reform. An attempt to restrain private revenge within fixed rules, led to the trial by battle ; this introduced the trial by jury ; and the transition from one to the other was at that time as great an advance, as difficult an achievement, as would now be the substitution of an international tribunal for the practice of war. We have only to try the experiment ; and an honest effort would bring us to the same result in regard to national duels that our ancestors reached on the subject of private duels.

Time was when piracy was reputable. Our own ancestors were originally pirates ; and even at a period not very remote, some pirates were held in high honor by our forefathers. They were even knighted, appointed to offices of trust under government, and admitted to the privileges of the church ! In 1588, Sir Thomas Cavendish, on his return from a piratical excursion along the coast of South America, boasted that he had plundered and sunk nineteen ships, and burnt all the villages to a great number that came in his way. Dampier, a buccaneer in the Pacific Ocean, was, near the close of the sixteenth century, promoted to the command of a British ship of war.

Review the general progress of society and government. In patriarchal times, every family was an independent community ; and from that state mankind proceeded gradually to embody themselves in villages, and towns, and cities, and states, and empires. Disputes between small communities, as now between nations, were settled by war ; but they came at length to be adjusted by laws made common to them all ; and a congress of nations is simply an extension of the same principle. Feudal baronies were once scattered over Europe, occasions of incessant quarrels ; but, when those baronies came under the common, supreme law of an empire to which they attached and incorporated themselves, those private, feudal wars ceased. So the Heptarchy of England was merged in a single state ; and thus conflicts between those petty governments, like quarrels now between individuals, were restrained by those laws which throw their shield over the whole nation. Such a tribunal as we propose would be to the nations of Christendom, in some respects, what the government of England or France became to the petty states or baronies brought under her jurisdiction.

Mark, also, the change of public opinion concerning war. Lord Bacon, the glory of modern experimental philosophy, regarded war as a healthful exercise, that ought to be encouraged for the purpose of preventing national degeneracy! Hobbs, the famous skeptic, avers that states are under no obligations of kindness or justice to each other. Fenelon himself, a minister of the Prince of peace, eulogized not less for his gentle, Christian spirit than for his taste and genius, applauds the custom of war in his *Telemachus*, and recommends that the young prince under his care should be sent abroad to learn this murderous art. Adams the elder thought war as inevitable, as necessary for the moral purification of the world, as hurricanes, storms, and volcanoes; while his son, John Quincy Adams, assures us, and bids us impress the truth on our children, that war, like every other moral evil, is under our own control, and will cease of course just as soon as men shall choose to have it cease. What a progress of public sentiment concerning war, from Bacon and Hobbs to the present time!

But reflect on the meliorations of war itself. Man, naturally savage and ferocious, preys upon his own species, unlike any beast of the forest; and, though softened and restrained by civilization, nothing but Christianity will do all that is needed. The first step in checking the war-spirit, was to mitigate the evils of the custom by discarding some of its most atrocious practices. Once it allowed *any* mode of injuring an enemy,—treachery, perjury, poisoning wells, private assassination; but such practices are indignantly frowned from the present war-system of Christendom. Once all persons were in one way or another involved in war; peaceful citizens were butchered in cold blood; women and children were either massacred, or sold as slaves; but the atrocities and horrors of war have been so far mitigated in these respects, that such persons are by the present laws of this custom exempted from all personal injury, and large classes of men are from their employment shielded against its assaults. Still there is a glaring inconsistency in some of these exemptions; for a catcher of codfish is exempted, but not the catcher of whales; so that a fisherman's exposure to the attacks of war depends on the size of the fish he may chance to catch. Once all property, private as well as public, was liable to seizure or destruction; but now individuals are indemnified for whatever losses they may sustain. Here too is a curious principle of the war-code; for it guarantees private

property on shore, but not when afloat; so that a vessel anchored in a shallow harbor may be safe at low water, and a lawful prize at high tide.

Look, also, at the improvement in civil society. Formerly man went forth, sword in hand, to plunder from his neighbor's fields or flocks what would meet the simplest wants of nature; but the refinements of modern times, introducing luxuries, and multiplying arts, conveniences, and comforts, have raised barriers against war, by rendering peace necessary to our social habits. To savages, peace and war are about the same in point of personal comfort; but to civilized communities, there is an immense difference; and this difference, so deeply felt, so universally dreaded, operates as a strong, ceaseless check upon the war-spirit.

Mark the new direction of the public mind, and the increased power of public opinion. There was a time, not very remote, when none were deemed worthy of high honor but the hero, and he was a universal favorite, an idol of the old and the young, of male and female. There was no other way to glory; and war became the great field of ambition, almost the only theatre of competition among the aspiring. Things are changed. A man may now rise in numberless ways,—by science, by the arts, by commerce, in any department of literature, in any of the learned professions. Public opinion now favors effort in these departments; and public opinion rules the world. Crowned heads bow before it; and Napoleon himself trembled at the pen of a British reviewer, and negotiated with Lord Amherst to restrain the freedom of the press in England, for the security of his own power and fame.

Trace the present intercourse of nations, and the interlinking of their interests in a thousand ways. The evils of war are now felt not merely on the tax-book, but on agriculture, on commerce, on manufactures, on all the sources of a nation's wealth and prosperity. This operates as a great check upon war. What kept us from a war with France in 1835? The weavers of Lyons, and the cotton-planters of the South. The blight of war is felt in all the walks of life, and thus leagues all classes more or less against it.

There is, also, a growing disposition to adjust international difficulties by pacific means, especially by arbitration. This method was conceived in ancient times, but rarely adopted in comparison with what it now is. Many instances within a very few years; as the offer of England to mediate between

us and France, her actual, successful interposition between France and Switzerland, and the reference of our boundary question to the king of Holland,—a failure which would not have occurred, if it had been referred to such a body as we contemplate in a congress of nations. This disposition to a reference of disputes is a bright bow of promise in the horizon of our cause.

MR. WALKER'S REMARKS

At the anniversary of the American Peace Society, in seconding the resolution of the Rev. John Lord, on the necessity of *special efforts* in this cause.

MR. PRESIDENT,—I rise to second the resolution of my respected friend, and, in doing so, will only remark, that the fact which it contemplates forms one of the greatest obstacles to our cause which exists in the community at the present time. Yes, Sir, strange as it may appear, the great objection which many, especially our zealous *Christian* friends, make to our efforts is, that they are unnecessary; that, when all men are converted, there will be no wars; that, consequently, our only business is to labor for the conversion of the world, and the triumph of peace will follow of course; that all the time and money we spend in special efforts for the extension of our principles, are worse than useless. Hence we meet the coldness and opposition of those from whom we might expect different things.

But, Mr. President, is there any truth in the position taken by our opponents? If the argument they thus use in regard to peace is correct, would it not have been equally good against the temperance reform? Might it not have been urged with equal propriety, that drunkenness must cease when all the world should be converted to a pure Christianity; that therefore all extraordinary exertions to arrest intemperance were uncalled for; and that the friends of humanity had only to use their efforts for the conversion of sinners, and they would obtain the great object of their wishes,—the removal of the evils of intoxication? I say, Sir, would not that argument have been equally well founded, equally just?

But, Mr. President, such an argument would be scouted by